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SUBJECT: Nassau Monthly-- February 2010

11. (U) This is a monthly report on a variety of topics of interest which do not merit full reporting cables.

--Haiti Earthquake Sparks Fear Of Illegal Drug Increase
--Cuban Detainee Shot at Immigration Detention Center
--Bahamas Gets Tough on Crime
--We're #4: Ship Registry
-- Court gives Pirate of Prague Safe Harbor in Bahamas
--We're #1: Container Super Ship
--We're #5: Offshore Banking
--Gay Cruise Ship Will Return to Nassau
--We're one of 12: Ugliest Airports
--Oil Terminal Expansion Project To Store Six Million More Barrels

Haiti Earthquake Sparks Fear Of Spike Illegal Drugs & Migrants

12. (U) Head of the Drug Enforcement Unit, Superintendent Anthony Ferguson, said an increase in the flow of illegal narcotics in the upcoming months is expected. This announcement was made in the wake of several major drug busts within a week in February. The earthquake in Haiti has also raised fears of the escape of thousands of criminals with drug ties from its main prison causing a significant rise in drug trafficking that will likely be felt in The Bahamas. To date 78 illegal migrants have been repatriated. The migrants were intercepted in waters near the Exuma chain, by officers who were on a routine patrol in the area.

Cuban Detainee Shot at Immigration Detention Center

13. (U) A Royal Bahamas Defense Force officer shot a Cuban detainee at the Carmichael Road Detention Center with a rubber bullet on February 3. The detainee allegedly tried to attack the officer with a makeshift weapon of sharpened bed springs. The incident occurred after the officer ordered another Cuban detainee to the back of the food line after he tried to jump the queue. Subsequently, eighteen other Cuban detainees began to shake the fence at the center in an apparent show of solidarity. Back-up Defense Force officers were called in to restore order. The detainee and two others were isolated from the general population. A police report was issued on the incident.

Bahamas Gets Tough on Crime

14. (U) A new National Crime Prevention Office was established within the Royal Bahamas Police Force and will be lead by Superintendant Stephen Dean. The mission of the office according to Dean is "promoting awareness and concern about crime, and disseminating the concept of self help and crime prevention." There are plans to set up a National Crime Prevention office on every island.

We're #4: Ship Registry

15. (U) According to a report from international research company Clarkson Research Services, The Marshall Islands became the third-largest ship registry of 50.7 million gross tonnage, followed by The Bahamas' 49.6 million gross tonnage. The research report also noted that The Bahamas, with a 4.2 percent registry growth rate, is well below the global average of 6.2 percent. The Opposition questioned why the government has not increased the number of Bahamas Maritime Authority global offices. The Bahamas has five offices, compared with the 20 worldwide for the Marshall Islands.

Court gives Pirate of Prague Safe Harbor in Bahamas

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16. (U) The Bahamian Court of Appeal upheld a Supreme Court decision not to extradite fugitive Viktor Kozeny on a habeas corpus application. Known as "the pirate of Prague" the Czech born Kozeny was imprisoned in 2005 after an international warrant was issued for his arrest. The 2005 indictment alleged that Kozeny and American businessmen Frederick Bourke and David Pinkerton bribed senior officials in Azerbaijan to take over the oil company. The men were charged under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which forbids American citizens and their companies from bribing foreign public officials. Kozeny was released in 2007 after Justice Isaacs ruled that it is not a crime to bribe a foreign public official in The Bahamas. This case has received wide coverage and interest from U.S. media outlets whenever there is a significant court decision. The ruling can be appealed to the final court of appeal, the Privy Council.

We're #1: Container Super Ship

17. (U) One of the largest container ships in the world, the MSC Tomoko, with 8,800 containers, docked successfully at Freeport Harbor in Grand Bahama on February 24. According to local port officials, the boat was as "big as an aircraft carrier, but with a wider hull." The MSC Tomoko draws 45-46 feet of water. Port officials have courted large container ship companies to promote the Port's expansion plans, which include the addition of 10 cranes and six berths.

We're #5: Offshore Banking

18. (U) The most recent edition of the International Monetary Fund's Cross-Border Investment in Small International Financial Centers ranked The Bahamas as holding the fifth- largest sum of external assets and liabilities among the world's offshore international financial centers. These assets and liabilities totaled USD 941.5 billion. Guernsey was ranked ahead of The Bahamas at USD 1.02 trillion, Bermuda at USD 1.57 trillion, Jersey at USD 2.02 trillion and the Cayman Islands at USD 8.4 trillion.

Gay Cruise Ship Will Return to Nassau

19. (U) Organizers of a gay cruise contracted to Miami Beach Gay Pride have defended their decision to travel to The Bahamas in the face of complaints from gay rights activists and gay rights groups. Gay rights activists expressed opposition to the cruise by pointing to the picketing of Rosie O'Donnell's Family Vacations Cruise in 2004, the banning of films with gay content and the high profile murders of several gay men in 2007 and 2008. Miami Gay Pride defended the decision by stating that such homophobic incidents occur everywhere, adding the cruise is an opportunity to try to change the attitudes.

We're one of 12: Ugliest Airports

110. (U) Travel and Leisure Magazine's February 2010 issue listed the Lynden Pindling International Airport (LPIA) as one of its top 12 ugliest airports in the world. The ranking was derived from an informal survey of frequent fliers, some of whom noted that LPIA's poor aesthetics and lack of atmosphere which made flyers feel "bleh" when passing through the U.S. departures terminal. LPIA officials used the article as an opportunity to highlight its USD 400 million airport expansion project, including a brand-new, fully modernized, and "attractive" U.S. departures terminal.

Oil Terminal Expansion Project To Store Six Million More Barrels

11. (U) VOPAK, a Netherlands-based company operating a major oil storage terminal in Grand Bahama, announced plans to launch a USD 350 million expansion project that would allow the addition of six million barrels of storage capacity. The expansion project would bring approximately 600 jobs for Grand Bahama, which suffers from unemployment levels of over 17 percent.
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